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VINDICATION

OF THE

Broad Cloth Weavers.

BEING,

The JOURNEYMENS

Dublin Journeymen

Broad Cloth

Weavers.

A N S W E R

TO

Mr. TEXTOR's LETTER

IN THE

Sixteenth CENSOR.

N U M B E R I.

D U B L I N :

Printed for J. SHEPPARD, at the *Merry Shepherd*, in
Clarendon-Market, M,DCC,XLIX.

VINDICATION

OF THE

British Museum



The following

ANSWER

TO

THE LONDON LITERARY

IN THE

Sixteenth CENTURY

NUMBER I

DUBLIN

Printed by J. Smith, at the British Museum, in the Strand.

P R E F A C E

T O T H E

C E N S O R.

Mr. CENSOR,

AS your Weekly Papers seem to be solely intended to redress the publick Grievances, which many of our Fellow Citizens have (no doubt) sufficient Reason to complain of. This method must be acknowledged by all true Lovers of their Country to have been begun with a true Spirit of Patriotism, practised with more than ordinary Zeal, and consequently Calculated for the Interest of this Kingdom in general, and the respective members of its many Societies and Corporations in particular. This is sufficiently evident from the frank and open Admittance you candidly allowed all Persons, of every rank and Degree, without Distinction or Partiality, both to complain of any wrong done them either publick or private, that may be thought prejudicial to Society; and on the other Hand to clear themselves of any Guilt unjustly laid to their Charge.

As we the Journeymen Broad-Cloath Weavers have been in our proceedings misrepresented by the Textor in your 16th Censor, and by him unjustly Calumniated, we have pursuant to the Method prescrib'd by you at your first setting out, laid before you the wrong done us, hoping you might communicate it to the Publick, but as the multiplicity of your Affairs did not admit of your taking due Notice of our Papers sent in, which you promised in your 17th Censor to do, at a Convenient time, we therefore beg Leave to take this method of clearing ourselves to the Publick, of the many Calumnies we are wrongfully aspers'd with by the Textor.

VINDICATION, &c.

NOW, as Dr. *Fealty* justly observes, that the clashing of the Members of a Body Politick is like the Collision of Flint and Steel, whereby has been struck out many Sparks of Truth; and this is much the case of the Journeymen Broad-Cloath Weavers, who seem in particular to be struck at by said Cenfor, for which reason we beg to be the first hear'd, where if we Express any ungrateful Truths, they may blame themselves rather than us.

First then we all readily Grant that the strength and Riches of a Nation consist in its Number of Inhabitants when fully employ'd in mechanical Arts; yet permit us to observe that the reverse of the Proposition is full as just and true, *viz.* that if there are more Mechanicks reared than there is Employment for, they are the Bane and Pest of a Country; and this is evident from the many hundreds that have but too often been obliged to crowd the Streets and doors of the Publick, whilst the Land has been lying waste for want of Hands to Cultivate it, which has still Increased the general Calamity. Now of all the Trades in the Kingdom, there is no one demands or requires the Attention of the Legislator to prevent the too great Increase of Hands, as the Woollen doth, there being no one (nor all put together) that can be so destructive, not only to this Country but to *England* also, of which they are so very Sensible, that they have lately Seiz'd, and have now

now in Jail in *London*, some Woollen-weavers that were going to *Spain*. 'Tis well known, that *England* (as to Riches and Manufactory) made a very despicable Figure in *Europe*, till the Reign of that truly Great and Magnanimous Queen *Elizabeth* of Glorious Memory, whose great Charity, Bounty, and encouragement, joyn'd to the very bad Policy of the Duke *De Alva*, the *Flemish* Governour, setting up the Inquisition in *Flanders*, she drew over the *Flemings* to *England*, and with them the Art of manufacturing to perfection the Wooll, of which before they were ignorant, since when, it does, and (we hope) ever will flourish, if the false maxims persu'd by the Masters dont ruin both them and us, by rearing more Weavers than they can employ; and if so, pray wont it naturally follow, that as such unhappy Wretches can't get Work, and as a living Man must have Bread, to procure which if they steal they'll be hanged, and to beg, such sturdy Beggars are in danger to be sent to *Bridewell*, to avoid which Evils, within these few Years, above 40 Broad-Cloth Weavers have been obliged to Transport themselves to his Majesty's Plantations, as by the Tholsel Records will appear; and many others are gone to *Spain*, as by Letters from thence can be made appear, and are now actually improveing the Woollen Trade there, to *England's* great Prejudice, and our Sorrow. Nor is France wanting to drain many Men from hence on the same Account, few or none of which would ramble so far a broad for Bread, if they could have got Weaving to have percur'd it at Home. Won't it, we say, naturally follow, that our objection against instructing in the Woollen Trade more than can be employ'd therein, or possibly get Bread thereby, is founded on Principles truly National and solid Reason?

But as our Masters affirm, that we have entered into a wicked Combination, not to take or teach an

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Apprentice the Art and Mistry of Broad-cloath Weaving these some Years past, which is most false, as by the following List will appear, there being above 130 Apprentice Boys this Instant at the Broad-Cloath Weaving in the *Liberty*, Viz. In *Ormond-Street*, 6 Boys; in the *Square*, 15 Boys; in *Chamber-Street*, 17; in *Dolphins-Barn-lane* 7; in *Mill-Street* 6; in *Crooked-Staff* 5; on the *Combe* 7; *Truck-Street* &c. 8; *New-Market* 11; on *Pimblico*, 14; on *Byrn's-Hill*, &c. 29; *Meath-Street*, 4 Boys; in all 130: Which number we humbly presume the Publick will judge rather more than enough, considering that our Trades have but a home Consumption; but still our Masters cry out, that we are for enhancing our Prices; but in this they accuse us unjustly, as in the other, for we neither have, or do require any more Wages than we at present are paid, tho' we can make it appear, that we formerly had more: Indeed, this we require, that they would be as Good as their Words, and fulfil the Promise * they made in the Hall, in the Presence of many Worthy Brothers of the Corporation, but that the Publick may be no longer in the dark, as to the true Reason that causes the Masters to be so anxious to increase the number of poor Workmen, this is it, that they may have 5, 6, or more of them standing for every Piece, not a Day or two, but often so many Weeks, which time he that spends least of it about his Master's House, running of Errands, washing Wooll, or doing such other Drudgery as his Master shall set him about, he, I say, that so neglects to attend, is sure to be kept longest idle, tho' for all the above Articles, they got no recompence. For which Impositions, as we justly complained of, and were promised a redress as above, they have not yet made their Word and promise good; and because we should cry to them for Justice, they still add to our Affliction, by their buying our Notes, and Extorting Caption Fees, where

* In regard to the Spooling and Warping, which comes to about one Penny in three Yards, which was formerly given,

where no Caption is made, by marking Writs, where no Damages could be proved, by sending some to *Newgate* for Frivilous Words, Extorted by themselves, by reviving old Indictments, that lay long dormant, and thereby compelling some to leave their poor Families to starve, or starve themselves in Goal. Nay what is worse, giving Sanction to a Society (contrary to Law) composed of broken Constables, common Rioters, and Professed Papists, nay one of them was forced to fly his Country for enlisting Men, for foreign Service, another of them stands indicted for Murder, yet by their means is at Liberty, bearing Arms, and what is worse of all, said Masters Boast that by their Interest with Grand Juries, and Friendship with the Neighbouring Justices, they will get all Bills cancelled or thrown out, that are or shall be lodged in our behalf; but we hope, these our Grievances will soon fall into the Hands of some of our truly Great and Pious Patriots, that will endeavour to get us a fair Hearing, and on fully proving our Alligations, procure us a Speedy and perpetual Redress of all our Impositions and grievances, and thereby prevent us poor Tradesmen, from becoming Troublesome either to the Legislators or the Publick. And here I can't but remark, what Mr. *Textor* observes, concerning the great Improvements we have made both in Cloath and Colour, these few years past, especially in our Premium Cloaths, which the great, wise, and Sagacious Judges allowed to Equal, if not Exceed, any that's made in Europe; and if so tis oft objected (by Lovers of their Country) why is not all our Cloaths in their several Kinds of Equal Goodness? to which we Answer, that as the Premium Cloaths demonstrate that 'tis neither want of good Workmen, nor want of Tools, but the Covetousness of our Masters, who to save but one poor penny in the pound in the Article of Scribbling, and likewise Sixpence per String to the Weavers,

vers, which string is three yards; which they pay for said premium, thus cause but too just Complaints to the Scandal of our Trade and Country, which they little regard.

But Mr. *Textor* is pleased to assert, that tis common for us to earn as much in two Days as to keep us idle by Drinking the rest of the Week; now in Answer to this, we can assure the Publick, that where there is one Weaver, earns one Shilling per Day, the Year round, there are 50 who earn less, tho' their usual Hours in Frost and Snow are from 4 or 5 in the Morn, till past nine at Night, and the like in Summer. For the Truth of this, we appeal to our Masters Books; and if so, sure 'tis not in our Power to be as extravagant as they represent us; but that the World may know who is in the right, once more we beg they would give us a Meeting in their Hall, which request if they refuse or neglect to comply with, the Publick may be well assured, that what's here asserted, is by their Silence acknowledged for Truth, and that they make use of the word *Enhanced Prices*, only to impose on the Publick, to Enhance the Price of Cloath without any Necessity whatsoever. In a word, be pleased to Judge which would be most for the Ease, Honour, and Interest of the Country, to have 100 Men Employed all the Year round at the Weaving, and 100 more left to till and Cultivate the Ground, to provide Food for themselves and Thousands more, or to have the 200 employed but half the Year, and the other half year to be begging and Starving, while many Gentlemens Lands lying waste and Barren, for want of Hands to cultivate and improve the Same.

Now, Mr. *Censor*, if you consider the Premised, with your accustomed Impartiality, sure you cannot but join us in this reasonable and conclusive Inference, viz. that the false Imputation publicly levelled at us, by Mr. *Textor*, are false and groundless, and consequently were devised by him for some sinister Purpose, or at least to serve a self-interested or private End.